

(Washington, DC) Today, Congressman Alcee L. Hastings (D-Miramar) made the following statement in recognition of National Minority Health Month, which seeks to raise awareness of, and address, the various issues that contribute to disparate health outcomes for Black and African Americans, Hispanic and Latino Americans, Asian Americans, American Indians and Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and other Pacific Islanders.

The Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Office of Minority Health (OMH) was created in 1986 in an effort to improve the health of racial and ethnic minority populations in the United States through the development of health policies and programs that help eliminate health disparities. For more information, please visit <http://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/>.

"It is clear that we must do more to improve the health of our nation's minority communities. Due to various factors, including a lack of access to affordable, quality health care, African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, and American Indians experience higher rates of illness and death from certain health conditions compared to their white counterparts. In particular, these include disparate rates of heart disease, stroke, specific cancers, diabetes, HIV/AIDS, asthma, hepatitis B, and being overweight or obese.

"In fact, African Americans have the highest prevalence of hypertension in the world and are the most likely to develop diabetes and to suffer from related complications. Health among Hispanics also varies significantly. Puerto Ricans, for example, suffer disproportionately from asthma, HIV/AIDS, and infant mortality while Mexican Americans suffer disproportionately from diabetes.

"Furthermore, Asian Americans experience disproportionate rates of certain cancers, tuberculosis, and Hepatitis B, while American Indians and Alaska Natives are at particular risk for mental health conditions like suicide, obesity, substance abuse, sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), teenage pregnancy, liver disease, and hepatitis.

"According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in 2009, 17 percent of the white population under 65 years of age was uninsured compared to 19 percent of African Americans, 33 percent of Hispanics, and 32.5 percent of American Indians.

"As we move forward with comprehensive health care reform, we must be mindful of the unique challenges we face, including mistrust, language and cultural barriers, and the lack of health insurance coverage, in improving the health of our communities. Culturally competent health care and education remain key to addressing these health disparities. I support the goals and ideals of National Minority Health Month and will continue working with my colleagues in Congress to improve the health of our nation as a whole."

Congressman Alcee L. Hastings serves as Senior Member of the House Rules Committee, Ranking Democratic Member of the U.S. Helsinki Commission, and Democratic Chairman of the Florida Delegation.

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